

The Untold Story of the Founding of the Detective Agency

Translated by [Snowyesque](#)

Section 1: The Daily Lives of a Certain Detective Agency

“Kunikida-san. Why was the Armed Detective Agency created?”

Sitting at a seat at the café, Tanizaki Junichirou tilted his neck. The tall man sitting in front of him frowned deeply and responded in a serious voice.

“So you don’t know?”

“No...I’m sorry.”

It was night.

At a narrow, secluded table, two men sat face to face. Between the two of them were two servings of sesame fried dumplings and roasted green tea. Both of them wore serious expressions. They were a strange sight to see, which might involuntarily provoke a second glance—but they were the Armed Detective Agency’s investigators, and this was the scene of a late-night meeting.

This was the café known as “Uzumaki.” It was located on the first floor of the building which the Armed Detective Agency also occupied, and made tea in a somewhat old-fashioned manner.

“You’re right, even though I work here, I don’t know about it—why the Detective Agency was founded. Do you know?”

“Of course I know.”

The man across from Tanizaki—Kunikida Doppo—nodded.

Tanizaki smiled. “I’m not surprised.”

“Only vaguely, though.”

“Vaguely?”

“Yeah. This is only hearsay, but apparently the Detective Agency was founded about ten years ago. The president was the one who founded it. There was some sort of encounter, which I’ve heard was what triggered the establishment of the Agency.”

Tanizaki replied, “I see,” and nodded. “That really is...vague, isn’t it.”

“That’s why I said so. I don’t know any more details beyond this. I haven’t had the opportunity to ask him about it again. How about you ask him directly?”

Tanizaki looked somewhat distressed.

“M-me? No way, I’m still just a subordinate.”

“It doesn’t matter to him at all whether you’re of a lower rank or not. He’s not the kind of man to conceal something he’s asked about.”

“But he’s so incredible... And moreover, when he’s angry, his eyes are sharp enough to bore a hole through an iron plate. If I was a girl I would cry just seeing it.”

“Yeah,” Kunikida nodded. “The president has mastered every martial art. After founding the Detective Agency, he tore apart many evils and crushed countless conspiracies. He’s got a lot of experience. He could just glare at some girls and have them spurting blood from both eyes. Instant death.”

“Instant death,” Kunikida repeated.

“Sort of like a curse,” Tanizaki replied.

“Well, that’s the president for you. In any case, why are you asking about the reason for the Agency’s founding? I mean, as a member I understand why you’d be curious, but why now?”

“About that,” Tanizaki said, bringing his tea to his mouth. Evidently it was still too hot, because he stuck out his tongue with an *ow, ow, ow*. After that, he spoke again.

“Dazai-san asked me.”

“Dazai?”

At that moment, Kunikida's face twitched.

"Yes, so..."

"Wait, hold on. Let me calm down," Kunikida raised his hand to stop Tanizaki. "Lately, just hearing that guy's name gives me a dull pain in my stomach from the stress. When I so much as sense him approaching, my peripheral vision starts flickering black and white—it's a natural proximity warning. So just give me a moment to calm down."

"That sounds pretty serious... I understand how you feel, though..." Tanizaki made an uncomfortable face.

"There's no one in the Detective Agency who can control Dazai—that rotten vagabond—other than me. No, strictly speaking, no one can, but... the president put me in charge of supervising him. That says a lot about the president's trust in me. Therefore, I can't just so easily let go of that guy's reins—"

Stopping in the middle of his sentence, Kunikida was suddenly at a loss for words. Looking up at the ceiling, he rubbed his eyes, saying quizzically, "Huh...? Did the lighting just get worse...?"

Tanizaki looked up at the lighting; however, there was nothing abnormal about the fluorescent lights.

"That's my signal~"

A voice sang out of tune at the café's entrance.

"Uwaaah!"

Kunikida's seat made a loud rattling sound.

Standing at the entrance was a tall young man.

A sand-colored coat and black, unkempt hair. A tall, thin figure stood in front of the entrance, holding a paper bag in his right hand.

Dazai Osamu. Like the other two, he was a member of the Armed Detective Agency.

“My, no matter when I hear them, Kunikida-kun’s screams are wonderful. That reaction is like watching your life shorten before my very eyes. Oh, and Ma’am, I’ll take my usual black tea.”

The middle-aged café owner poked her face out from the inside of the store, saying “Oh, Dazai-chan, what a nice man to see as always!”

Saying, “And you’re a nice woman, Ma’am,” Dazai waved his hands, taking a seat next to Kunikida.

The narrow seat became even narrower.

“Dazai... What did you come here for?” Kunikida asked in a low voice, as if he was a wounded animal trying to intimidate a predator.

“Eh? Obviously, I came to shorten Kunikida-kun’s lifespan.”

Before he had even finished speaking, Dazai was being strangled.

“You—! How much do you need to increase my problems—? You—! I—! Just how much—!”

“Uhehahahahaha!” Dazai laughed while being shaken.

“H-hey, you two. We’re indoors.”

Tanizaki looked around the café uncomfortably. However, this café *was* in the same building as the Detective Agency. The customers and the clerk alike were accustomed to both Dazai’s eccentricities and Kunikida’s yelling. The customers and café workers all watched them with affection, as if they were elementary school-aged brothers fighting.

Tanizaki met the warm gazes of the other customers and, with an “Ahaha,” forced a smile. They only laughed.

Kunikida was still shaking Dazai, and Dazai still seemed to be quite enjoying being shaken.

“You’re too free-spirited! Today, too, you only decide to show your face at this hour... You skipped work, and then what?! You were just off bothering people somewhere, right?! Who do you think has to apologize and clean up after you?!”

“Who? ...Well, obviously that’s—”

“Who said you could speak?!”

Kunikida wrung Dazai’s neck, causing a light snapping sound.

Dazai made a happy expression.

“Um, about that,” Tanizaki interrupted. “What I was just talking to Kunikida-san about relates to that. When Dazai-san asked me ‘Do you know why the Armed Detective Agency was created?’, I mean.”

“*What?*” Kunikida gave Dazai a dubious look.

“That’s right,” Dazai responded, adjusting where his neck was still cracking from being shaken. “Today around lunchtime, I met with Tanizaki-kun.”

“Where.”

“A standing bar.”

Kunikida’s face slowly morphed into one that resembled a patient with neurotoxins circulating through him.

“You skipped work and went to a standing bar... Well, that’s within the range of what I would expect from you, so I’ll let it slide for now. I’ll get mad at you later. However, Tanizaki, why were you also at that sort of place? Were you skipping work, too? An 18 year old, skipping work and going drinking at noon? The adverse effects of underage drinking differ in their statistical theory, but it’s certain that alcohol affects the secretion of testosterone. And even without considering statistics, if you only drink alcohol at your age, in a few years you’ll end up like Seaweed Brain over here!”

Kunikida pointed at Dazai forcefully.

“Thank you. I am a seaweed brain,” Dazai said, bowing his head quickly.

“N-no, that’s not—” Tanizaki flailed his hands hurriedly. “I went *for* work! I got a call, and when I rushed over to the standing bar, Dazai-san was—”

“That’s right. Thanks for that.”

“What...? Then, Tanizaki, you went for work? The same bar Dazai was at? ...That can’t be a coincidence. So you were called there by Dazai, then. Did he make you pay the tab? Or was he causing all sorts of problems—” Stopping there, Kunikida went pale and bent at the waist. “N-no way—Really? He did something again?”

“I’m sorry, Kunikida-san,” Tanizaki said, glancing down apologetically.

“Geez, I didn’t do anything bad enough to warrant that much glaring,” Dazai said, laughing. “I drank alongside some people at the bar, chatted them up a bit, and left. That was really it. ...Although, well, on the way, I sort of got caught up in a bomb threat.”

“...”

Kunikida’s upper body shook as he stood there in silence.

“...Kunikida-san?” Tanizaki asked anxiously.

“I... passed out there for a moment,” Kunikida said in a weak voice, raising his head. “A bomb... you say? Oi, Tanizaki, if something like that happens, tell me that at the *beginning* of the meeting. A bomb from who? Were the police called? Did the bomb squad come? What happened to the bomb after?”

“It’s right here,” Dazai said, putting the paper bag on the table with a thud.

“Uwaah!” Kunikida said in surprise, backing up in his seat.

“It’s fine, it’s just a well-done fake,” Dazai said, shrugging his shoulders. “To summarize: Yesterday, this bomb was delivered to that standing bar. It was addressed to me, from an anonymous sender. So, once I opened the package, I found the bomb in there. The fuse was disconnected when I unwrapped it, but it ended up being a situation where if I moved it even a little bit, it might explode. Thus, the police and the Detective Agency were contacted.”

“And that’s why I rushed over.”

“You... How do you always manage to attract trouble with such high efficiency?”
Kunikida made an anguished expression, as if he were eating a poisonous mushroom.

“It’s fine, isn’t it? Since it was a fake and all.”

At that exact moment, the black tea that Dazai had ordered arrived. Dazai took it with a smile, tossing a few sugar cubes into it before taking a sip. And then he said: “As it turned out, the bomb was a fake. I realized that it was only a timer, and didn’t have any explosives in it. It was just harassment. I’ve also already spoken to the culprit, so it’s all right.”

“You caught the culprit?”

“Yeah. When I opened the bomb, there was a letter inside that read ‘*Look only at me.*’ It was the approach of a radical woman who was pining for me excessively. Of course, there are a lot of people like that, but I went through the list and identified the culprit. I scolded her quite soundly. After all, if I was sent a bomb every time I went to a bar, I wouldn’t be able to drink.”

Kunikida looked at Dazai tiredly, only saying “...Is that so.” His expression seemed to say, *I can’t understand why this guy is so popular.*

“Well, that’s that. And the constable who rushed over from the police department said something to this effect: ‘Because the Armed Detective Agency is protecting the city, we can also do our jobs with peace of mind.’ But don’t you think that’s a bit strange?” Tanizaki asked.

“Hm,” Kunikida said, raising an eyebrow. “How nice for him. As usual, he gives someone some half-baked sweet face and he gets a bomb threat—this enemy of women! And even if I’m being kicked, I suppose in this situation, I can’t complain.”

While Kunikida was saying that, Dazai was kicking at the legs of his chair.

“It’s definitely a good thing,” Tanizaki said with a wry smile. “But I’m torn between being grateful and being doubtful. After all, protecting the city so that citizens can do their work in peace is the police’s job. It’s made me wonder why the president started doing work that people consider ‘protecting’.”

“That’s what we were talking about earlier,” Dazai said with a smile.



“I see,” Kunikida said, folding his arms. “The Detective Agency’s work is definitely connected with danger. It’s no enterprise to take on half-heartedly. But as we already know, the president is a righteous and benevolent man. No matter where you looked in this country, you would never find a person more suitable to lead the Detective Agency than him. The founding of the Detective Agency was a directive from heaven—or so I think, at least.”

Kunikida sipped at the tea in front of him. Then, he gave a sideways glare at Dazai.

“...Speaking of the Detective Agency,” Kunikida said with a barbed voice, “I just remembered. Dazai, what are you planning on doing with that brat?”

“Brat?”

“The homeless one you picked up yesterday,” Kunikida said, still holding his teacup. “You said you were going to have him join the Detective Agency, right? Were you serious? Isn’t that completely reckless? Bringing a boy you’ve only just met—a dangerous ability user who’s been designated by the ward as a savage beast, no less—into the Agency?”

“Ufufu. I’m perfectly sane. The truth is, that’s why I came here today. Oh, this’ll be so much fun.”

“Ah, I heard about that,” Tanizaki said, leaning forward. “As a result of the city requesting that you two go and capture a man-eating tiger, you ended up finding a homeless boy who has the ability to turn into a tiger. Oh, man. Solving such a bizarre case in a single day, and even sheltering a kid with an ability—you guys really do deserve the Detective Agency’s stamp of the Detective Duo.”

“Oh, now I’m embarrassed.”

“Don’t equate me with him.”

Dazai and Kunikida said at the same time.

But in fact, these two men are the Agency’s favorite pair for solving cases. Ever since Dazai joined two years ago, the Detective Agency has boasted its best rate of success for solving high-difficulty cases. To outsiders who don’t know about their personalities or bad relationship, Dazai and Kunikida are often described as a well-coordinated pair.

What they don't know is pretty dreadful.

"Anyway," Kunikida said while glaring at Dazai, "I'm opposed to it. If you absolutely must, then go talk it over with the president. If he allows it, I won't say anything."

"I've already talked it over with him," Dazai said with a smile. "'Think about the contents of the entrance exam,' he said."

"Really? You even got permission for the entrance exam?" Tanizaki asked.

"I sure did. But the problem is," Dazai brought his thumb to his mouth, as if in thought. "I still haven't decided on what to make Atsushi-kun do for his entrance exam. Of course, this can't all be up to me alone. Right, *Senpai*?"

At the end of his speech, Dazai threw a meaningful smile at Kunikida.

"Of course," Kunikida said with a sour expression, folding his arms. "The exam tests a candidate's suitability for the company, and furthermore, it's an important rite of passage to ascertain the authenticity of the souls of its employees. Besides, the newcomer this time has already been designated as a savage beast. If we don't do this right, and it comes to light that we've been harboring a dangerous subject illegally, suspicion will also fall on the Detective Agency itself. Although the president has already authorized this, we need to treat this entrance exam even more carefully than usual. There's no way that this could be decided just with your irresponsible ideas."

"Then it's settled," Dazai said happily, drinking the rest of his tea before standing up. "Let's go. Everyone's already been called to the Agency's conference room."

"—For what," Kunikida asked flatly.

"Kunikida-kun just said it himself, right? To come up with a plan."

Smiling, Dazai put up an index finger for emphasis.

"It's the president's orders. To test the new star of the Detective Agency and his suitability as an employee, everyone's input is necessary."

Dazai took a deep breath. Then, he declared: "This is the first screening meeting for the entrance exam!"



The Armed Detective Agency is a private armed investigation organization, comprised of people with unusual abilities. Within the Detective Agency, there are detectives who carry out investigative activities to solve a given client's problems, and clerks in charge of information collecting, public relations, accounting, and so on. The number of people is not constant, but, including the president, there are always about ten active members.

Of all the members, almost all of them possess some sort of ability.

Ability User: Tanizaki Junichirou. Ability Name—"Light Snow."

Ability User: Kunikida Doppo. Ability Name—"Doppo Poetry."

Ability User: Dazai Osamu. Ability Name—"No Longer Human."

The other detectives also have their own abilities, and use them to carry out their own investigative activities. The world of the day, which is dominated by public authorities, including the police department, and the world of the night, which is dominated by the underworld—they are a group of gifted individuals who exist in the twilight.

The founding of the Armed Detective Agency, which occurred ten or so years ago, happened due to the president meeting a certain ability user.

That particular story, however, will be told later.

Right now, we are talking about the current Detective Agency. Meant to assess the pros and cons of his entry, this is the story of his entrance exam.

Nakajima Atsushi—the night before his entrance.



The Armed Detective Agency's office is located on the fourth floor of a red-brick building. Within it is a gym floor, a reception/conference room, the president's office, a doctor's office, an operating room, and an office kitchenette. Although there is a back door with an emergency spiral staircase, everyone exclusively uses an old elevator for entering and exiting.

It was that very elevator that Kunikida and the others used to enter the Detective Agency.

It was night. Most of the clerks were returning home, so there were very few remaining. However, there were still two or three on the floor. Under the bright white of the fluorescent lights, they were writing letters, reading novels, or sipping noodles. They remained there not because their work was unfinished, but because they wanted to stay.

From the seaside visible from the office window, a distant merchant ship sounded its steam whistle several times.

After briefly raising their hands in greeting to the clerks, Kunikida and the others left the office floor and entered the conference room.

There was already someone there.

“My, my. Three men walking in with such sullen faces—what’s the matter? If you’re dissection volunteers, that’s all well and good, but we’re closed for the day.”

Sitting with her slender legs crossed, Miss Yosano looked up from her newspaper.

Ability User: Yosano Akiko. Ability Name—“Thou Shalt Not Die.”

She is the Detective Agency’s exclusive surgeon. In possession of an extremely rare medical treatment ability, she is responsible for single-handedly treating the numerous, unending wounds that the members of the Detective Agency receive in their encounters. Her skills are unrivaled; however, because of her extreme fondness for surgery and dissection, which leads her to try and dissect even those who suffered only minor injuries, she is feared by her allies even more than her enemies.

It should be noted that her main surgical tool is a hatchet.

“Yosano-sensei,” Tanizaki said, blinking with surprise as he stood in front of everyone. “Can I ask what it is you’re doing in the conference room?”

“As you can see, I’m reading the newspaper,” Yosano-sensei said, rustling the newspaper she was holding. “I was so busy today that I didn’t even have time to read the paper.”

While looking through the newspaper articles, she added: “There are some good articles again today.”

“You don’t give off the impression of having much interest in newspapers, though,” Tanizaki said while peeking at the paper. “What are the interesting articles?”

“Well, the most interesting one is the obituary,” Yosano said, grinning. “Of everything in this world, it judges those people the most fairly.”

“It sure does,” Dazai said with a smile, standing in front of the entrance.

After that exchange, Tanizaki and the others entered the conference room. They sat, in order: Tanizaki, Kunikida, and then Dazai.

The ticking of the conference room’s clock echoed through the room.

“Well, then, what did you come to the conference room for?” Yosano asked, lifting her gaze from the newspaper.

“Ufufu, we’re having a meeting to decide on the entrance exam,” Dazai answered, smiling. “Yosano-sensei is also aware of the tiger boy from yesterday, since you were there, right? As we’re deciding on his entrance exam, we’re inviting everyone’s opinions. We’ll be deciding this democratically.”

“Democratically, huh?” Yosano raised an eyebrow. “Why don’t we just do it the same way we did Tanizaki’s? Is there anything wrong with that?” Yosano turned to face Tanizaki. Tanizaki’s face went pale and he shook his head from side to side.

“I-I would really prefer not to remember that time.”

Tanizaki was also a newcomer, and what he meant by the time of his entrance was that he had passed a very harsh entrance exam. However, due to its excessive severity, Tanizaki had firmly sealed away the memories of that time into his subconscious. This is because remembering it revives the psychological trauma.

“I’m fine,” Tanizaki said, leaning forward. “But how about we make this next exam more reasonable?”

“Wow, look at this article,” Yosano said, still looking at the newspaper. “It says ‘Fire At Unauthorized Shanghai Crab Breeder, Countless Dead Or Wounded.’ I bet there’s a delicious smell at the scene of the accident. Maybe I’ll stop by on the way home.”

Yosano licked her lips.

“I-isn’t that a bit rash...?” Tanizaki said, looking perturbed. “And in any case, Yosano-san, that newspaper is from two months ago. It’s old news. Even if you went now, there wouldn’t be any smell of burnt crab.”

“Oh, you’re right.” Yosano frowned at the date on the newspaper. “I wonder who would leave an old newspaper out in a place like this. Sheesh—And here I’ve been waiting for this amount of casualties for so long. I was going to help out the autopsies by chopping up the living and the dead alike.”

Yosano ruefully cast aside the old newspaper.

“Um, dead people are one thing, but cutting up the living with a hatchet is a bit...” Tanizaki said with a troubled expression. As someone who was always being chopped apart himself, he felt considerable compassion for the victims.

“Grilled crabs are one of the treasures of this world,” Dazai commented, somewhat changing the topic.

“Oi, Dazai,” Kunikida said in a low voice, who had until that moment been silent. “Enough with the talk about crabs. What about the meeting? Didn’t you say a while ago that you called everyone to the conference room? Besides Yosano-sensei, it doesn’t look like anyone else is going to show up.”

“Hmm,” Dazai said, turning his head to look at the clock. “I called everyone already, but I guess all of our investigators are just selfish. We might just have to wait a little longer.”

Kunikida crossed his arms and looked at Dazai.

“I don’t want to hear the Crown Prince of Selfishness calling everyone selfish,” Kunikida said with a frown. “And even though you call this a meeting, have you even decided how the proceedings will go?”

“Yes, of course. I planned everything out so that Kunikida, the Prime Minister of Planning, couldn’t complain.”

Rising, Dazai wrote on the white board that had been installed in the corner of the conference room.

“First: Everyone brainstorms a proposal for the entrance exam. Second: We determine the optimal plan from the ones proposed. Third: Based on the determined test contents, we decide who is in charge of what. —Well? I planned it all out, didn’t I?”

“I admit that you did actually plan this out, but I nonetheless have a bad feeling about how this will turn out,” Kunikida said, frowning. “The third point—‘Decide who is in charge of what’—is especially suspicious. Knowing you, you’ve already planned to ensure that you don’t get any official role. Am I wrong?”

“No way~ There’s no way that an honest man like me would do something as dirty as that. Is Kunikida-kun, my very own colleague, saying that he doesn’t trust me?”

Dazai spread his arms wide, so as to display his innocence.

“I don’t trust you.”

“I don’t really, either...”

“I have so little faith in you that it feels good.”

Dazai jumped up cheerfully.

“You all are horrible!”

“Well, everyone can keep tabs on that. In any case, the third point’s decision on who is in charge of what is fine for now. How about we start on the initial ideas?”

Kunikida looked at the clock again.

Speaking of the detectives that Dazai had gathered, Ranpo and Kenji were still absent. The two of them were necessary for the final decision, which required a majority vote, but the earlier proposal stages could be discussed with the members that were currently present. So said Kunikida.

“My, someone sure feels motivated,” Dazai said with a smile. “If Kunikida-kun is this enthusiastic about it, I feel as if we’re already done. Let’s go straight to the meeting. So, who here has an idea?”

Returning to his seat, Dazai looked at everyone in turn. Everyone in the conference room looked back at him. Because the meeting had begun so abruptly, no one knew how they were supposed to look. Even among the veteran members of the Detective Agency, who were perfectly capable of killing an enemy ability user while humming a tune, there was something that they were not particularly good at.

That is ‘reading the situation.’

With investigators gathered together who each possessed vastly different abilities and personalities, such a feat as comprehending everyone’s thoughts would be a major search on par with hunting for treasure in unexplored regions of South America.

Nevertheless, the silence was quickly broken.

“Oh, Tanizaki-kun, you’ve got an expression that clearly says ‘pick me!’” Dazai, who had become impatient, took a stab at piquing Tanizaki’s interest.

“Eh? M-me?” Tanizaki said, pointing at himself in confusion.

“From what I can see, you’ve got the light of a good idea overflowing from your face! Come on, tell us all about your treasured trump card—a proposal that’ll make everyone give you a standing ovation! We’re prepared to be impressed!”

“Please don’t raise the bar that unreasonably high!” Tanizaki cried out in a panic. “And anyway, I don’t think there’s any need for such an unconventional exam. Why don’t we choose one of moderate difficulty among the requests that are coming in now? I heard that that’s what happened with Dazai-san’s.”

“Ooh, good idea. Thank you, Tanizaki-kun,” Dazai said, writing the words ‘Acceptance By Resolving A Request’ in black on the white board. “Is anyone opposed?”

“You already know, Dazai,” Kunikida said. “If he was just some average rookie, this would be fine. But this one is designated by the military police as a dangerous beast with orders

to subdue on sight—in other words, he’s a wanted man. Although the Detective Agency is able to conceal his identity to some degree, we shouldn’t be throwing him directly into the field before he’s even passed his exam. The president also told you this, right?”

“As expected from the president’s best apprentice,” Dazai put his hands on his cheeks. “Yes, the president told me the exact same thing. Mm, it’s a reasonable proposal, but we ought to think of a test that won’t attract the attention of people outside the Agency. Sorry, Tanizaki-kun.”

“I understand,” Tanizaki said regretfully. “So, then—how about he has to solve a problem that’s inside the Detective Agency? That way he won’t have to go outside.”

“What would the problem be?”

“Um...Fixing a paper jam, or cleaning the pipes, or something...”

“This isn’t a recruitment test for a husband who does chores,” Kunikida said, drawing his eyebrows together. “Furthermore, there’s no way that there would be an incident major enough to ‘test the authenticity of his soul’ inside the Agency.”

“Well, we’ll put that one on hold,” Dazai said, writing ‘Solve Troubles In The Agency’ on the whiteboard, before adding ‘?’ after it.

“With all these complaints, we’ll never make any progress,” Yosano said, pointing at Dazai. “Dazai, since you’re the one who brought all of this up, *you* propose something. Have you thought of anything?”

Dazai was silent for a few seconds.

“...Ufufu.”

I’ve been waiting for someone to say that—that was the kind of smile he had.

Then Dazai pulled out a stack of paper from his paper bag, and put it where everyone could see it. On the paper were closely-packed words that were difficult to tell if they were written by a skilled or unskilled hand.

“Of course I thought of something! Look closely at my flawless entrance exam plan!”

“Huh,” everyone said, looking at Dazai with impressed faces. Only Kunikida looked the same as before, wearing a bitter expression.

“The first idea. This is a test of physical ability, with an emphasis on endurance. We’ll go to the Yokohama Municipal Zoo—30 minutes by train—and sneak in. Then we’ll throw the rookie into the cage of a Himalayan black bear. When we go back the next morning, if he has defeated the bear and escaped, we’ll employ him.”

“Oi,” Kunikida said in a low voice, glaring at Dazai.

“If he manages to reach a compromise with the bear, then we can make him an alternate.”

“*Oi.*”

“However, there’s the possibility of accidents with the bear, so here’s my next idea. — This one places an emphasis on thinking and problem solving skills. There’s an old man in 6-chome who’s so stingy that you’d think he was the reincarnation of a man who died for money, who is said to have spent two hours lecturing someone for shorting him just 5 yen. So he needs to find a reason to borrow 1,000 yen from him.”

“*Oi.*”

“And if he manages to play him for a fool for an entire month, then he passes.”

“That’s harsh!”

“And then, the next one—”

Kunikida stopped Dazai as he was fiddling with his stack of papers.

“Wait, wait, wait, are all of your ideas like that? What are you even thinking for the entrance exam? Furthermore, there’s no way that he could stay away from that old man for a whole month. His hair would fall out from the stress.”

“Then he could borrow it in Kunikida-kun’s name,” Dazai said, looking over Kunikida’s head.

“No way in hell!” Kunikida shouted, clutching his head. “Beyond that, you know that everyone at the Detective Agency is an investigator, right? Think of something a little more suitable for the exam! Something that tests righteousness, prowess, wisdom, and morality.”

“Eh? How about this, then. If he can eat 2 kilograms of sugar in 5 minutes—”

“It’s because of nonsense like that that your ideas can’t be used! Moreover, you’re gradually deviating from the topic each time! Your ideas are just for shock value. Sheesh, is there *anyone else* who has a somewhat more respectable proposal?”

When Kunikida was clutching his scalp and groaning, at that moment—

“Sorry for making you wait!”

The door to the conference room had been forcefully opened. The hinges made a strange sound.

Everyone looked back.

“It got late while I was plowing the field in front of my house. Today I harvested some top-class radishes that look like they could be used to beat someone to death with. I’ll share some with everyone later!”

The one who raised his voice so energetically was a young man wearing a straw hat. He was small in stature, wearing cotton underclothes. His gloves, which were in his pockets, were covered in fresh dirt. In addition, he was barefoot.

This was the youngest investigator in the Detective Agency, Miyazawa Kenji.

“Oh, Kenji-kun. We’ve been waiting for you!” Dazai greeted him with a smile. “We’ve only just begun, so you’ll get the gist of the meeting soon enough. Right now, we’re having a lot of success with the discussion! So, Kenji-kun, please give us a few of your own bright ideas!”

The young detective, Kenji, cheerfully replied “Okay, I will do my best!” and entered the conference room.

He padded barefoot across the conference room, and read the words on the white board. Then, he looked back at the conference participants, and said “So we’re checking to see whether he has the skills to join the Agency, huh.”

After thinking for a few seconds, he raised his hand toward Dazai. “Okay!”

“Go ahead, Kenji-kun,” Dazai said, pointing at him.

“I think it’d be good if he won against me at arm wrestling!”

Everyone went silent, wearing serious expressions. Even Dazai was silent.

That is impossible.

Kenji’s ability—“Be Not Defeated By The Rain”—is an ability that physically strengthens his body in the face of hardships. In short, he has superhuman strength. He can throw an entire car with ease. One time, he wrestled three boastful sumo wrestlers, and he sent all three of them flying at the same time.

It is still unknown where exactly they landed.

That is arm wrestling with Kenji.

In the minds of all those attending, all they could imagine was the newcomer’s arm being torn off with a scream of agony.

“Um, that’s probably...” Tanizaki, who had been silent, said timidly. He looked at everyone with a stiff expression.

Next to him, Yosano grinned to herself and muttered, “...It could work.” Tanizaki decided to change the subject.

“A-any other ideas?”

Not especially bothered, Kenji asked, “Other ideas?” and padded around the room some more, deep in thought.

“The Detective Agency sure does take things steadily on a day-to-day basis,” Kenji said, clapping his hands together. “It’s not a group that quickly enters an enclosure and concludes with a sudden rampage—At least, surely the president would say as much. Yes, at the field by my house, there’s a fallow field in *just* the right condition. I think it would be good if he were to plow the field daily, and then we determined his acceptance based on the outcome of the autumn harvest!”

Everyone looked at Kenji wordlessly.

We're in too deep, said their expressions.

“...R...ight,” Tanizaki chimed in reluctantly, with a strange voice.

“I do think that everyone agrees with the first half of that, but... It'll be a while before autumn, don't you think...? Right, Kunikida-san?”

“R-right,” Kunikida said in surprise, having not expected to be called upon so suddenly.

“I see,” Kenji said, disappointed but not upset as he rolled his eyes. “Well, how about this? There's a very common rite of passage in my village.”

“Oh, what's that?” Tanizaki asked, raising his eyebrows.

Kenji is a native of the incredibly far-off countryside, deep in the mountains to the Northeast, between a forest and a swamp. Up until 2 months ago when he had been scouted by the president and then come to the Agency, he had lived a simple life surrounded by fields and cattle. This is why he has a natural air, as if he had been born directly from the soil.

“There are a number of eligibility requirements to enter our youth association, which mostly helps with agriculture, but how about this one?” Kenji said, lifting one finger. “Predicting the weather past today.”

“Huh... that's pretty interesting. It figures that the weather would be important to farmers. So if he can predict tomorrow's weather without looking at the weather forecast, he passes?”

“No, not just tomorrow's. An entire month's. You can predict the weather from the state of the soil and animals. I can do it too—Sunny, cloudy, sunny, sunny in the morning but rainy in the evening...”

After that, Kenji recited the entire month's weather. Unfortunately, everyone was too busy being shocked, and did not absorb a single word he said.

“That...is amazing.” Tanizaki finally opened his mouth. “But do you have any other ideas?”

“After that, if he can hold a conversation with a cow, he passes. Then, if he can converse with a dog, he passes.”

“Kenji-kun’s village is amazing...” Tanizaki muttered, stunned.

“Anyone with the ability to summon rain passes. Also, anyone who can make a tree grow from a seedling in a single day passes, too.”

“That’s an amazing set of elites in your village!”

“If you can build a community center overnight, you pass.”

“Toyotomi Hideyoshi?!”

“If you can defeat an evil god, you pass.”

“Do those even exist?!”

“And after that...”

“W-wait a second,” Tanizaki said, stopping him. “This conversation is heading in a direction completely unrelated to the Detective Agency’s entrance exam, and I’m pretty sure that if we keep going we won’t be able to come back, so I’m sorry, but let’s stop there.”

“Oh, is that so?” Kenji said regretfully, tilting his head.

When Tanizaki looked back, he caught Dazai just as he was writing ‘Toyotomi Hideyoshi’ on the white board.



The debate over the entrance exam was approaching its climax.

When Dazai proposed anything, Kunikida shot it down. When Kunikida suggested something, Yosano raised an objection. When Yosano had an idea, Tanizaki said “Wait, that’s a bit...”

Everyone, in an effort to choose the best possible candidate for the Detective Agency, banded together and put their energy into the discussion—or rather, that would have been too

easy. Simply due to the fact that everyone was far too unique, there had been no success with coming up with a ‘moderate’ idea.

“A rookie needs guts, right?” Yosano said, pulling her mouth into a smirk. “So, how about this? Everyone, look at the little finger on your left hand.”

Everyone looked at their little finger.

“Starting with the little finger on his left hand, if we rip them off in order...and he endures all 10 until the little finger on his right hand, he passes.”

“That’s way too harsh!” Tanizaki screamed.

“All right, then... 8 fingers.”

“That’s a shockingly meaningless compromise!”

“It’s fine, isn’t it? After all, I can heal him with my ability,” Yosano said, pouting. “If you’re telling me that I can’t go and rip off his fingers no matter how many it is, how about a test where I slice up the vital points on his lower body until he cries?”

All of the men in the room jumped up and held their crotches as if they could feel the imaginary pain.

“Please stop with the painful ideas!”

“Then, how about he and I have a drinking contest, and if he wins, he passes.”

“That’s alcohol-related harassment!” Tanizaki shouted.

“Hey, you’ve been pretty quiet for a while now, Kunikida-kun,” Dazai said. “It’s about time for the star of the show to appear, don’t you think? As our senior, if you’re going to give us your comet-like shining opinions, there’s no other time but now, you know?”

“...If you’re going to do that thing where you quickly praise me and then leave me to present my knowledge, then I’m not so much motivated to stand and speak as I am nervous,” Kunikida said, staring at Dazai. “Well, whatever. How about this? If he kills Dazai, he passes.”

“I see,” Tanizaki said and clapped his hands, impressed.

“...Other than that,” Dazai said, looking at Kunikida with half-closed eyes.

“If he can render Dazai speechless and make him reflect on his bad deeds up until now, he passes.”

“I’m okay with that,” Tanizaki said, nodding.

“Other than that.”

“Then...! He can sandwich Dazai between two planks of wood or something, and while blowing him with hot steam he can stab him with countless needles, and while occasionally passing an electric current through him he can repeat ‘This is your fault, all your fault,’ and then, and then...!”

In the heat of the moment, Kunikida was gesturing at something invisible; hitting, twisting, and shaking it. His eyes were bloodshot.

Tanizaki and the others in the conference room pulled away from him a bit.

“Um... I’m sorry,” Dazai said in a small voice, but Kunikida did not hear him.

“But you’re not actually sorry, right, Dazai-san?” Tanizaki asked.

“Right,” Dazai replied simply.

Just then, there was a knock on the conference room door.

“Excuse me,” came a girl’s voice, like a bell. “Everyone, you’ve been working hard at your meeting. I brought some refreshments, so how about you all have some and rest a bit?”

A young schoolgirl opened the door.

She had glossy black hair that extended down her back, and her slender hands, peeking out from her school clothes, were holding a tray of food.

“Naomi,” Tanizaki said, lifting his head in surprise. “I thought you went home already.”

“I wanted to go home with Nii-sama, so I’ve been waiting,” the schoolgirl said, smiling softly. The mole under her eye was seductive beyond her years.

Tanizaki Naomi. While attending school, she also works in the office of the Detective Agency. She is Tanizaki's younger sister.

With skilled movements, she placed servings of green tea and meat buns on top of the conference room's table. The steam coming from the meat buns smelled delicious, as if they had been freshly made.

Coming up next to Tanizaki, Naomi got close enough to his face that he could feel her breath, and spoke softly.

"Nii-sama," Naomi whispered, faint heat coming from her breath. "You're wonderful today, too."

As she said that, she stroked her brother's neck with her fingertips.

Everyone in the meeting pretended that they didn't see.

These siblings are blood-related—or so they say. Tanizaki says that she is his real sister, and Naomi insists that he is her real brother.

However, their facial features are not even remotely similar.

Compared to Tanizaki, who had timid yet honest-looking eyes and a smile always lacking in self-confidence, Naomi's face was full of sex appeal that did not match her age.

She had voluptuous lips, and eyelashes so long that they seemed as if they would make a sound every time she blinked. Her eyes were as large and deep as a bottomless pit, and if an innocent boy peered into them inadvertently, he would be trapped within a world of fantasy and, inevitably, all of his blood flow would concentrate in a single part of his body.

To make matters worse, regardless of location or the people around them, she was always trying to make physical contact with her brother. She'll touch his ear while having a conversation, stroke his thigh while working, and breathe in his ear whenever she gets the chance. Every time, Tanizaki becomes conscious of the people around him and gets embarrassed, but Naomi just enjoys the sight of her brother reacting like that.

"Oh, Nii-sama, you've got lint right here...I'll pick it off for you."

Saying that, Naomi traced a nail over Tanizaki's collarbone. Of course, there was no lint.

Tanizaki turned red and blinked, looking uncomfortable.

Everyone was troubled by what they saw.

“Are you guys really related? Is it all right for siblings to act like that?”

—Is a question that not a single person in the Detective Agency had the courage to ask.

Everyone at the Detective Agency was sure that they were faking it, but if someone asked and they plainly replied “You’re right,” how were they supposed to react?

“Hey, Nii-sama, I brought the thing I promised. It’s in my bag. Tonight, we can—”

“Eh? A-ah, right, thanks.”

With Naomi whispering her meaning, and Tanizaki answering ambiguously, someone with the courage to ask “What are you talking about?” was also nowhere to be found.

“These meat buns are delicious!” Kenji said from the foot of the table, eating the meat buns he had been given. As far as Kenji was concerned, his appetite far outweighed any sex appeal.

“Hey, Naomi-chan. While you’re here, what do you say about giving us an idea or two?” Dazai asked, smiling. “Right now, we’re trying to get opinions from everyone on what to do for the newcomer’s entrance exam.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful,” Naomi said with a smile, putting the food tray under her arm. “But do you really want me to come up with something?—”

“Since we’re looking for ideas, anything is welcome,” Dazai said. “You can just say something about your favorite interests, if you like.”

“Y—” Kunikida stopped Dazai with just a look.

“I see—”

With her head tilted to the side, Naomi thought for a moment. Then, while blushing, she offered up 3 ideas.

Unfortunately, none of what she said can be written here.